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Quality Assurance

Kids Come First II is a comprehensive plan for improving the child welfare system and for improving the outcomes for children and families. Creating a strong quality assurance program and accountability structure is an important component of the plan, to ensure the plan is implemented and outcomes are improved.

Quality Assurance Program

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Each of the Children's Administration local offices will establish and maintain a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team. These teams will include a cross-section of staff and community representation. The teams will meet regularly to review data regarding practice, and to develop local improvement plans to improve performance measures.

Accreditation

We will continue to achieve our goal of having all 44 Children's Administration local offices meet the Council On Accreditation (COA) standards by 2006. Currently twelve offices and headquarters have met these best practice standards. An additional twenty-three offices are actively preparing for Accreditation.

Case Review

We have revised and strengthened our case review program to support monitoring of practice improvement. Case reviews will continue to examine case records but will also include interviews of children, parents and caregivers. Case practice in each of our 44 offices will be reviewed semi-annually and approximately 1,500 cases will be reviewed each year. The results of the case reviews will be examined by local CQI teams which will develop an action plan to address identified areas of practice needing improvement. The case review reports will be available publicly and an annual summary report will be published.

Performance Data Review

Each Children's Administration region and local office has been provided with their current measure of performance related to each of the twenty-three federal Child and Family Services Review outcome measures. Performance goals to be achieved annually have been identified for each outcome measure. These will be updated and reported on quarterly.

Indian Child Welfare Compliance

The Kids Come First II plan includes working with the Tribes and Indian Organizations to develop a separate quality assurance program for measuring compliance with the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). This is an opportunity for Washington to be the first state to develop a comprehensive Indian Child Welfare quality assurance model.

Increased Training

The Kids Come First II plan contains strategies to provide additional training to Children's Administration staff, foster parents, and contracted providers including:

- Joint team work training for social workers and foster parents
- Training on engaging families for social workers and foster parents
- Mandatory annual training for social workers
- Required in-service training for foster parents
- New training for contracted service providers
- Customer service training for all Children's Administration staff
- Community information sessions (Community Academy) for community partners, advocates and parents to learn about child abuse and neglect, the child welfare system and the dependency process
- Indian Child Welfare (ICW) training for foster parents and service providers
- Supervisor's Training Academy
- Program Manager's Training Academy

Accountability Structure

The Kids Come First II plan has a strong commitment to accountability and an accountability structure with both internal and external components.

Internal components

Children's Administration Management will provide ongoing oversight of the Kids Come First II plan. In addition: The Children's Administration Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) advisory committee will provide monthly advice and consultation to the Administration to assist in achieving the goals of the plan.

External Components

Legislature oversight

The Washington State legislature will continue to play a strong oversight role in relation to the implementation of the Kids Come First II Comprehensive Improvement Plan, and especially those matters related to federal Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and Braam Settlement Agreement items.

Public oversight

Community advocates play an important role in improving the child welfare system. Advocates, the general public and the media will be able to assess the progress on implementing the KCF II plan and improving outcomes for children and families through access to the progress reports that the Children's Administration and the Braam Panel will publish on a regular basis.

Federal oversight

The federal Program Improvement Plan (PIP) items will be monitored and reviewed quarterly by the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). In addition, DHHS will conduct a comprehensive review of PIP implementation progress at the end of the first and second year of the PIP portion of the plan (October 2005 and October 2006).

Braam Panel oversight

The Braam Panel, established as part of the Braam Settlement Agreement will, beginning in November 2004 monitor and review the implementation of those areas in KCF II related to the settlement agreement. The Braam Panel will report publicly on these matters every six months beginning in November 2005.